

1 December – Prisoners for Peace Day: Supporting peace and human rights in Russia



14 October 2006, Russian Embassy in London. A delegation of the National Union of Journalists attempts to deliver a petition and a wreath in memory of Anna Politkovskaya
Photo: Andreas Speck

On 7 October 2006, Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya was murdered outside her flat in Moscow. This was not an isolated case - several journalists have been killed in Russia in recent years - and it was not a coincidence that Anna Politkovskaya was the target.

Russia is the third deadliest country in the world for journalists over the past 15 years, behind only the conflict-ridden countries of Iraq and Algeria. A report by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) found that 42 journalists had been killed in Russia since 1992, many of them slain in contract-style executions and the vast majority unsolved by Russian authorities.

But Anna Politkovskaya was not only an oppositional journalist - which would have been dangerous enough in Russia. The focus of Anna Politkovskaya's work was on the war in Chechnya, and human rights violations by Russian forces in Chechnya, or against Chechens living in Russia. With this focus she had to touch on two central pillars of Putin's

power in Russia: the Russian military and security forces, and Russia's war on terror in Chechnya.

Extremely insignificant?

President Putin responded to the murder of Anna Politkovskaya only when pressed to do so by journalists during a visit to Germany. He then said: "However, the degree of her influence on the country's political development ... was insignificant." If that would be true, why then was she murdered?

Anna Politkovskaya had been threatened and attacked numerous times in retaliation for her work. In February 2001 security agents detained her in the Vedeno district in Chechnya, accusing her of entering Chechnya without accreditation. She was kept in a pit for three days without food or water, while a military officer threatened to shoot her. Seven months later, she received death threats from a military officer accused of crimes against civilians. She was forced to flee to Vienna after the officer sent an e-mail to Novaya Gazeta

promising that he would seek revenge.

When she was killed, she was again working on a new story on human rights violations in Chechnya. And obviously Putin would like this to be "insignificant."

Not only journalists

And its not only journalists. Only a few days after the murder of Anna Politkovskaya, Russian authorities closed the Russian-Chechen Friendship society in Nizhny Novgorod - again, because it was highlighting Russia's war on terror in Chechnya. Obviously, this is just another attempt to silence dissent, following the introduction of a new law on NGOs and civil society organisations. And the Guardian reported on 19 October that several well-known international NGOs have to cease their operations in Russia because they missed the deadline for registration under the new law. However, this was often due to bureaucratic delays. Until 18 October, only 91 out of up to 500 international NGOs had been approved by the Russian

authorities - the remainder had to suspend their activities.

Again, some of the NGOs concerned are involved in humanitarian aid in the North Caucasus - in Ingushetia or elsewhere, often providing humanitarian aid to Chechen refugees.

A climate of violence

The killings of journalists and the crackdown on NGOs and civil society groups happen in the context of rising violence against minorities and political activists. In November 2005, two anarchists were attacked by fascists in St Petersburg, leaving one of them dead, the other one heavily injured. Especially Caucasians living in Russia face racist attacks and abuse regularly. And the present escalation of the conflict between Russia and Georgia - with the deportation of hundreds of Georgian citizens from Russia - adds even further to racist threads in violence within Russian society. Clearly, things are not going well in Russia...

Andreas Speck

Editorial

October was not a good month for Russian human rights activists. On 7 October, Anna Politkovskaya, a well-known journalist who regularly exposed Russian human rights violations in Chechnya, was murdered in her flat in Moscow. Six days later, on 13 October, the Russian Chechen Friendship Society (RCFS) of Nizhny Novgorod was ordered closed by a local court, because the recently adopted NGO law makes it illegal for an organisation to be headed by a person convicted of "extremist activities". Amnesty International commented that Stanislav Dmitrievskii, Executive Director of RCFS, was convicted on "race hate" charges on 3 February 2006 for publishing non-violent articles by Chechen separatist leaders, and was - in view of AI - convicted for the peaceful exercise of his right of freedom of expression and should not have faced trial in the first place.

Only a few days later the military prosecutors in Chelyabinsk dropped their investigation of four army officials accused of failing to stop the hazing of army conscript Andrei Sychyov - a case that received a lot of public attention earlier this year because of the violence and cruelty involved. While the person who beat him was sentenced on 26 September to four years imprisonment, no further action will now be taken against those in charge of protecting conscripts.

These three unrelated new items shed some light on the situation in Russia - a situation which is getting worse, while Western leaders and businesses increasingly make deals with Russia. Chechnya, and the increasingly racist policy towards Caucasian citizens within Russia, is Russia's "war on terror", and the silence of Western leaders is the price paid for Russian cooperation in Bush's "war on terror". For us as a peace movement, however, it is important to not be silent about Chechnya and Russian human rights violations, but to support peace and human rights activists in Russia and Chechnya.

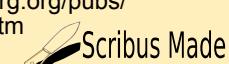
Andreas Speck

The Broken Rifle

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This issue of The Broken Rifle was produced by Andreas Speck. Special thanks go to everyone who provided the information used in this issue. If you want extra copies of this issue of The Broken Rifle, please contact the WRI office, or download it from our website.

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 Scribus Made



Prisoners for Peace Honour Roll 2006

How the list works

First are prisoners' names (in bold), followed by their sentence, then their place of imprisonment with a small map and, finally the reason for their detention.

Information about countries where prisoners have had their sentences suspended, or where sentences have been served or completed during the year, are in *italics*.

Armenia

Although Armenia passed a law on conscientious objection in 2004, the country continues to imprison conscientious objectors. Many conscientious objectors also refuse to serve substitute service, as it is controlled by the Ministry of Defence. An amendment to the law on conscientious objection now provides for the prosecution of objectors who refuse to perform substitute service.

In May 2006, Jehovah's Witnesses COs applied to the European Court of Human Rights, stating a violation of their human right to conscientious objection.

Eritrea

Paulos Eyassu (24/09/1994—)
Negede Teklemariam (24/09/1994—)
Isaac Mogos (24/09/1994—)
Aron Abraha (09/05/2001—)
Mussie Fessehaye (June 2003—)
Ambakom Tsegezab (February 2004—)
Bennet Fessehaye (February 2005—)
Henok Ghebru (February 2005—)
 ↗ Sawa Prison, Eritrea

Amanuel Tesfaendrias (March 2005—)

↗ Wia Prison, Eritrea
 All together nine Jehovah's Witnesses are imprisoned for conscientious objection to military service. Three Jehovah's Witnesses are imprisoned since 24 September 1994, for refusing to perform military service. All three have never been charged for their "crime". The maximum penalty for conscientious objection is three years.

Finland

Although under pressure from the UN and other international institutions, Finland continues to imprison total objectors, and refuses to bring its law on substitute service in line with international standards. On 16 October, 19 total objectors were in prison, but only four who will still be in prison on 1

December gave permission to publish their names.

Kenneth Eklund

Erno Pennanen (01/08/06—17/02/07)
 ↗ Helsingin työsiirtola, PL 36, 01531 Vantaa, Finland

Santeri Lintunen

↗ Ojoisten työsiirtola, PL 36, 01531 Vantaa, Finland

Hannu Luode

↗ Satakunnan vankila, Käyliön osasto, PL42, 32701 Huittinen, Finland

Greece

In 2006, the situation in Greece did not improve, in spite of broad international attention. Several COs are awaiting the outcome of their appeal trials, and could face imprisonment.

Israel

Israel continues to imprison draft resisters for the refusal to enlist in the Israeli military. However, the Israeli practice of imposing disciplinary sentences of up to 5 weeks repeatedly makes it impossible to predict now who will be in prison on 1 December. Please check WRI's website for updates and new alerts at <http://wri-irg.org/news/alerts>.

Puerto Rico

José Pérez González (21519-069) (five years – out 15/07/08)
 ↗ Edgefield FCI, PO Box 725, Edgefield, SC 29824, USA

Has been sentenced for conspiracy, damage to federal property, and/or probation violation on 01/05/03 for resisting the US military bombardment of Vieques, Puerto Rico.

Russia

Igor Sutyagin (15 years)
 ↗ 427965, Respublika Udmurtiya, g. Sarapul; ul. Raskolnikova, 53-A, YaCh-91/5, 14 otryad; Russia

Imprisoned since 27/10/1999, now convicted of espionage for researching public nuclear weapons information – sentenced 07/04/04.

South Korea

In 2004, the country's Supreme Court and Constitutional Court ruled against the right to conscientious objection. There are about 1,000 conscientious objectors in prison, the great majority of them Jehovah's Witnesses. Presently, two cases are pending before the United Nations' Human Rights Committee.

This year also saw widespread protest against the relocation of US bases in South Korea, with many arrests.

Kim Ji Tae

↗ Pyeongtaek Gu Chee So, Dong Sak-Dong 245-1, Pyeongtaek, South Korea
 Imprisoned for nonviolent resistance to forced relocation of farming communities for US Army base expansion. Trial continues until 3 November 2006

USA

Greg Boertje-Obed
Michael Walli
Carl Kabat O.M.I.

↗ Burleigh County Detention Center, POB 1416, Bismarck, ND58502

EWMD Here direct disarmament of nuclear missile silo E-9 in North Dakota on 20 June 06 – awaiting sentencing on 04/12/06

Helen Woodson (03231-045) (106 months—out 09/09/11)

↗ FMC Carswell, Max Unit, POB 27137, Ft. Worth, TX 76127

Anti-war protest at the federal courthouse, Kansas City, Missouri, on 11/03/04 in violation of parole following release from prison on 03/09/04. Pled guilty to violation and four new charges on 18/06/04.

Kevin McKee (40886-050) (24 months—out 05/11/07)

↗ FCI Schuylkill Satellite Camp, POB 670, Minersville, PA 17954

Joseph Donato (40884-050) (27 months—out 31/01/08)

↗ FCI Fairton, POB 420, Fairton, NJ 08320

Convicted in December 2004 for refusal to pay war taxes on religious grounds

Rafil Dhafir (11921-052) (22 years—out 26/04/22)

Action

- On 1 December, put aside at least one hour and write at least four cards to prisoners;
- Get your peace group or class or meeting place to organise a card-writing session;
- Set up a stall in your town centre, perform a bit of street theatre, or do whatever else it takes to attract attention and interest.

Sending cards and letters

- Always send your card in an envelope;
- Include a return name and address on the envelope;
- Be chatty and creative: send photos from your life, drawings;
- Tell prisoners what you are doing to stop war and war preparations;
- Don't write anything that might get the prisoner into trouble;
- Think about the sort of thing you'd like to receive if you were in prison;
- Don't begin, "You are so brave, I could never do what you have done";
- Don't expect the prisoner to reply;
- Remember—next year it could be you ...

Support our future work

For 48 years, War Resisters' International has publicised the names and stories of prisoners of conscience. Help us keep up the tradition. Send in a special PfP donation to WRI to help fund next year's research. Send contributions to: War Resisters' International, 5 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9DX, Britain (tel +44-20-7278 4040; fax 7278 0444; email pfp@wri-irg.org). Your outreach to prisoners does make a difference. **Show your solidarity!**

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Abuser and abused

Human Rights and the Russian military

The Russian military faces (at least) two human rights problems: dedovshchina, the hazing of new conscripts in the Russian army (see book review below), and human rights violations by Russian military in Chechnya or other conflict areas.

Dedovshchina

In 1988, the publication of an article *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, describing an incident in which a conscript who had been the victim of ongoing abuse in the barracks eventually snapped and turned his weapon against his fellow servicemen, killing eight, started the debate about dedovshchina. The practice of dedovshchina gave rise to another phenomenon more or less unique to post-Soviet Russia: the Soldiers' Mothers' Movement.

For many antimilitarists, it is difficult to relate to this movement. It can not really be classified as antimilitarist or pacifist – the main concern for many of the activists is to protect their sons from dedovshchina in the military. Most Soldiers' Mothers' Committees promote the professionalisation of the Russian military as an answer to the problem of dedovshchina.

However, the Soldiers' Mothers' Committees were and are important when it comes to

providing practical assistance to young men who do not want to join the military for fear of dedovshchina, and made many human rights abuses in the military public, thus putting the issue of dedovshchina on the agenda of Russian society, and contributing to the collapse of the Russian conscription system, and widespread draft avoidance.

In spite of the activities of the Soldiers' Mothers', almost 20 years later, things did not improve, as the case of private Sychyov shows, who became a symbol of the brutal realities of Russian conscription at the beginning of this year.

According to reports by the Mothers' Rights Foundation, "three thousand soldiers on average die every year in the Russian army. [...] 23% of deaths in the army are attributed to accidents, 16% to military operations, 15% to other soldiers' aggressive acts and 11% to illness. Besides, in 17% cases the perished soldier was the only child in the family and 14% of parents, who lost their son in military service, are disabled persons. Parents of a perished soldier can get a pension, which amounts 70 dollars a month, but they receive it only if it was proved that the cause of death wasn't a suicide or an ill-

ness. In addition, investigation often doesn't take into consideration that in most cases a soldier was driven to suicide after everyday humiliation, brutal tortures and harassment. According to Veronica Marchenko, the last year is characterized by unusually cruel murders and numerous criminal cases."

The Russian military is now responding with a shortening of military service (to 1 year from 2008 on), and increased professionalisation. However, it is unlikely that these steps will eliminate the problems mentioned above, as they are not accompanied by structural changes.

Chechnya

Chechnya marks the other side of human rights problems related to the Russian military: the systemic violation of human rights of Chechen civilians by the armed forces. And increasingly these practices spread to the neighbouring republic Ingushetia. Amnesty International writes: "Serious human rights violations, including war crimes, continue to be committed in Chechnya by both Chechen and federal forces. Chechen security forces are increasingly implicated in arbitrary detention, torture and 'disappearances' in Chechnya. Women suffer gender-based violence, including rape or threats of rape, by members of the federal and Chechen security forces. There are also reports that Chechen armed opposition groups continue to commit war crimes, including direct attacks on civilians. Amnesty International is aware of only two convictions during 2005 for serious human rights violations committed in Chechnya. The majority of investigations into alleged violations are ineffective and in the few cases that come to court the prosecution is flawed."

"Violence and unrest have also been reported in other North Caucasus republics, including abuses such as arbitrary detention, torture, "disappearances" and abductions. On 13 October 2005 a group of up to 300 gunmen

launched attacks on government installations in and near Nalchik, the capital of Kabardino-Balkaria, in which more than 100 people, including at least 12 civilians, are reported to have been killed. The raid was reportedly in response to months of persecution of practising Muslims in the region, including arbitrary detention and torture by law enforcement officials, and the closure of mosques. Following the raid, law enforcement officials detained dozens of people; many of the detainees were reportedly tortured."

While the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Russia on the disappearances and death of Chechen citizens in February and on 12 October 2006, the situation does not improve. In its February ruling, the ECHR first found Russia guilty of serious human rights violations in Chechnya, ruling that Russia had used disproportionate force in its military operations, indiscriminately targeted civilians, and failed to adequately investigate civilian deaths.

An anti-war movement?

In spite of widespread dedovshchina and the war in Chechnya, there is no anti-war movement in Russia to speak of. A few small groups – some Soldiers' Mothers' Committees, Autonomous Action, Memorial, and a few others, work more or less isolated from each other within Russia against Russia's "war on terror" in Chechnya. Many Russian activists place their hopes into the European and international institutions, and appeal to these to stop the war in Chechnya. However, this is unlikely to happen, especially as long as there is no public opposition to the war in Russia itself.

Andreas Speck

More information:

- Autonomous Action: www.avtonom.org
- Memorial: www.memo.ru
- Soldiers' Mothers' Committees: <http://www.ucsmr.ru>

World Social Forum 2007, Kenya People's Struggles, People's Alternatives

The World Social Forum

2007 will take place from 20-25 January 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. Following up from WRI's conference 'Globalising Nonviolence' in Germany in July this year, War Resisters' International will be taking part in the World Social Forum with several activities, aimed at highlighting nonviolence and promoting antimilitarism. WRI will use the opportunity especially to strengthen contacts with other groups in Africa, and to build networks in support of Eritrean human rights activists and draft evaders.

However, War Resisters' International is not uncritical of the World Social Forum process. It will be especially important to make efforts to criticise the increased role of traditional leftist/marxist groups in the WSF, and even more so the support to militarist regimes, however progressive they might present themselves.

Following up from WRI's participation in the Alternative Social Forum in Caracas in January 2006, War Resisters' International aims to organise a seminar 'Against All Militarism' at the WSF, which will also be a place to discuss the 'militarism of the left'.

We assume that many WRI activists will be in Nairobi. Please let us know in advance, and help us to make the WRI presence more visible and effective. We are planning on having a stall at the WSF, but we need volunteers to help us staff it, and we are sure there will be lots of other things to do. But if we know of each other, then we can also use the WSF to exchange our experience as WRI activists.

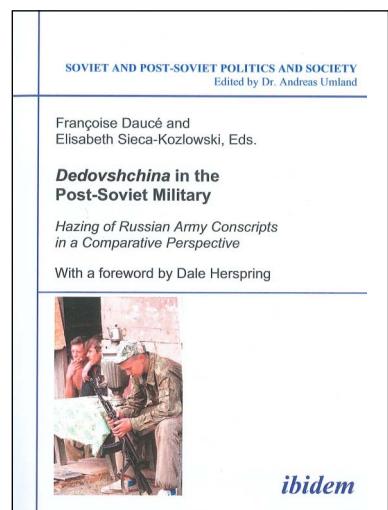
And if you can't go - we urgently need donations to make the activities at the WSF possible. If you want to earmark your donation for the WSF activities of WRI, please mark your contribution clearly with "for WRI at WSF".

If you have any questions, please contact the WRI office at info@wri-irg.org.

Book review

Dedovshchina in the Post-Soviet Military Hazing of Russian Army Conscripts in a Comparative Perspective

Françoise Dauçé and Elisabeth Sieca-Kozlowski (ed.), *ibidem*, Stuttgart 2006



dovshchina under Gorbachev.

In their introduction, the editors write: "Dedovshchina is at the crossroads of transformation which have taken place in Russia since the disappearance of the USSR. Among others, it is the consequence of historical legacy (Soviet and even tsarist), cultural tensions (inter-ethnic conflicts in the USSR), political dysfunctions (lack of democracy) and economic problems (lack of money in the army), all of which combined explain the longevity of this negative phenomenon" (page 18).

Many Russian groups advocate the professionalisation of the Russian military as a solution to the problem of dedovshchina, which they see as related to conscription. However, the authors of the book give plenty of reasons to be more cautious about such an (easy) approach. In his contribution, Joris van Bladel concludes: "If we speak about the professional armed forces we have to be careful what we exactly mean. If we mean that it is a way of recruiting soldiers, without qualitative changes in the armed forces, with its closedness as the most important feature, dedovshchina will not disappear. The same malfunctions and abuses will continue in the then new Russian professional armed forces" (page 298f). All well, and here we can add our pacifist perspective of demilitarisation of society as an answer to dedovshchina.

This book is not written from a pacifist perspective - hardly so, and many authors write from a clearly pro-military perspective. But this is not a weakness, as we as readers can easily add this perspective. What the book offers is some insight into the phenomenon of dedovshchina - the hazing of Russian conscripts to a degree unknown in Western societies.

The authors put dedovshchina in the context of the Russian post-Soviet society - a context characterised by a radical change of rules within society - from Soviet style socialism to wild capitalism - and increased social deprivation. But in doing so, it is not suggested that dedovshchina did not exist in Soviet times - in fact, the Soldiers' Mothers' Committees first exposed de-

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Anti-war demonstration in Moscow in February 2005

Photo: Andreas Speck

Conscientious objection in Russia A first impression after three years of practice

The Russian law on conscientious objection came into force on 1 January 2004, introducing a "right" to conscientious objection which is not in line with international standards, including a substitute service 1.75 times longer than military service [1].

In practice - leaving the long service time aside - problems arise mainly from the bureaucratic application procedure. An application for conscientious objection has to be submitted no later than six month before call-up. However, many potential COs are not aware of these deadlines, and the draft boards often give wrong or incomplete information. According to Sergey Krivenko, secretary of the All-Russian NGO Coalition for Democratic Alternative Civilian Service, there are cases of direct misinformation of people by officials of draft boards; knowingly giving wrong or insufficient information, such as that the right to CO only applies to people with

religious beliefs. However, most draft boards do not provide information on the right to CO.

Presently there are several cases where an application for conscientious objection was denied because of the missed deadline, and subsequently conscientious objectors were forced to perform military service. This part of the CO law is presently being challenged at the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.

There are also cases where the draft board did not pass on CO applications to the conscription board - the only body which is empowered to make decisions on CO applications.

Overall, since the law on conscientious objection came into force, about 3,500 people applied for conscientious objection. Presently, there are no statistics available how many applications have been accepted or turned down. However, about one hundred people contacted human rights organisations in Russia to ask for help because of problems with the bureaucracy, and mostly won their right to CO subsequently [2].

Conscientious objection in Rus-

sia has to be seen in light of the disastrous situation within the military, and widespread draft avoidance. According to a poll by the independent Levada center, willingness to serve in the Russian military has dropped to less than 40% at the beginning of 2006 [3]. However, for most young people draft avoidance - by means of "buying" medical exemptions or deferments of military service - is the method of choice, and not the legally provided form of conscientious objection. This means that CO numbers do not reflect the widespread discontent with the Russian military.

Andreas Speck

Notes:

[1] For a more detailed criticism of Russia's law on conscientious objection, see War Resisters' International: The Russian Federation: Human Rights and the Armed Forces; report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee, September 2003, <http://wri-irg.org/news/2003/un0309ru.htm>

[2] Information provided by Sergey Krivenko, email to WRI, 19 October 2006

[3] A-Infos, 7 March 2006

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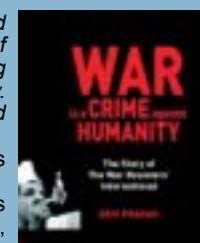
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Devi Prasad studied at Shantiniketan, Tagore's University, worked as a teacher and artist in Sevagram, Gandhi's ashram, from the 1940s until 1962. From 1962-1972 he was General Secretary of the WRI.



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